

Waste Disposal Interpretations

Sensitive Soil Features For Nutrient Management

Manure applications or commercial fertilizers onto soils must be carefully planned. The physical properties or landscape positions of those soils create potential for leaching of nutrients downward beyond the root zone or movement of nutrients towards surface waters. Soils sensitive to nutrient applications include those located in flood plains; coarse textured soils that allow water and soluble nutrients to move rapidly through them; soils only a few feet in thickness when underlain by fractured bedrock or high water table; and soils located on hill slopes of 6 percent or greater.

The **Sensitive Soil Features table**, for nutrient management practices, lists all soils in a county that are sensitive and gives the soil property or hazard that makes it sensitive. The lists are by county, soil map unit symbol and component name.

The following soil properties or hazard(s) taken into consideration are:

Flooding—frequently flooded soils, flood 50 times or more in 100 years

Coarse textured soils—soils that are considered coarse textured have the following USDA textures within 3 feet of the soil surface: sand (S), loamy sand (LS), loamy coarse sand (LCOS), fine sand (FS), loamy fine sand (LFS), loamy very fine sand (LVFS), coarse sand (COS), and very fine sand (VFS) or any of these textures with gravelly modifiers. Soils that have coarse textures within 3 to 5 feet of the soil surface are also identified.

Bedrock—bedrock within 40 inches of the soil surface

Seasonal high water table—(wet soil moisture status) within 2 feet of the soil surface or ponded water (-) value) above the soil surface

Slope—the soil map unit has a representative slope of 6 percent or greater

NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Nutrient Management (590) discusses nutrient management practices to use when encountering sensitive soils.

Nutrient Management Planning software developed by NRCS-Minnesota and the Minnesota Extension Service also lists nutrient management practices to use when encountering sensitive soils.

Sanitary Facilities

The nature of the soil is important in selecting sites for sanitary facilities (such as sanitary landfills, daily cover for landfills, and sewage lagoons), and in identifying limiting soil properties and site features to be considered in planning, design, and installation.

The sanitary facilities reports, with accompanying explanation, in this subsection can be used as a guide in developing sanitary facilities.

Landfills

This table shows the degree and kind of soil limitations that affect sanitary landfills and daily cover for landfill. The ratings are both verbal and numerical. Rating class terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features that affect these uses. **Not limited** indicates that the soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. **Somewhat limited** indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair performance and moderate maintenance can be expected. **Very limited** indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. The limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected.

Numerical ratings in the table indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

A **trench sanitary landfill** is an area where solid waste is placed in successive layers in an excavated trench. The waste is spread, compacted, and covered daily with a thin layer of soil excavated at the site. When the trench is full, a final cover of soil material at least 2 feet thick is placed over the landfill. The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect the risk of pollution, the ease of excavation, trafficability, and revegetation. These properties include saturated hydraulic conductivity (K_{sat}), depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, depth to a water table, ponding, slope, flooding, texture, stones and boulders, highly organic layers, soil reaction, and content of salts and sodium. Unless otherwise stated, the ratings apply only to that part of the soil within a depth of about 6 feet. For deeper trenches, onsite investigation may be needed.

Hard, nonrippable bedrock, creviced bedrock, or highly permeable strata in or directly below the proposed trench bottom can affect the ease of excavation and the hazard of ground-water pollution. Slope affects construction of the trenches and the movement of surface water around the landfill. It also affects the construction and performance of roads in areas of the landfill.

Soil texture and consistence affect the ease with which the trench is dug and the ease with which the soil can be used as daily or final cover. They determine the workability of the soil when dry and when wet. Soils that are plastic and sticky when wet are difficult to excavate, grade, or compact and are difficult to place as a uniformly thick cover over a layer of refuse.

The soil material used as the final cover for a trench landfill should be suitable for plants. It should not have excess sodium or salts and should not be too acid. The surface layer generally has the best workability, the highest content of organic matter, and the best potential for plants. Material from the surface layer should be stockpiled for use as the final cover.

In an **area sanitary landfill**, solid waste is placed in successive layers on the surface of the soil. The waste is spread, compacted, and covered daily with a thin layer of soil from a source away from the site. A final cover of soil material at least 2 feet thick is placed over the completed landfill. The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect trafficability and the risk of pollution. These properties include flooding, Ksat, depth to a water table, ponding, slope, and depth to bedrock or a cemented pan.

Flooding is a serious problem because it can result in pollution in areas downstream from the landfill. If Ksat is too rapid or if fractured bedrock, a fractured cemented pan, or the water table is close to the surface, the leachate can contaminate the water supply. Slope is a consideration because of the extra grading required to maintain roads in the steeper areas of the landfill. Also, leachate may flow along the surface of the soils in the steeper areas and cause difficult seepage problems.

Daily cover for landfill is the soil material that is used to cover compacted solid waste in an area sanitary landfill. The soil material is obtained offsite, transported to the landfill, and spread over the waste. The ratings in the table also apply to the final cover for a landfill. They are based on the soil properties that affect workability, the ease of digging, and the ease of moving and spreading the material over the refuse daily during wet and dry periods. These properties include soil texture, depth to a water table, ponding, rock fragments, slope, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, reaction, and content of salts, sodium, or lime.

Loamy or silty soils that are free of large stones and excess gravel are the best cover for a landfill. Clayey soils may be sticky and difficult to spread; sandy soils are subject to wind erosion.

Slope affects the ease of excavation and of moving the cover material. Also, it can influence runoff, erosion, and reclamation of the borrow area.

After soil material has been removed, the soil material remaining in the borrow area must be thick enough over bedrock, a cemented pan, or the water table to permit revegetation. The soil material used as the final cover for a landfill should be suitable for plants. It should not have excess sodium, salts, or lime and should not be too acid.

Agricultural Waste Management

Soil properties are important considerations in areas where soils are used as sites for the treatment and disposal of organic waste and wastewater. Selection of soils with properties that favor waste management can help to prevent environmental damage.

The use of organic wastes and wastewater as production resources will result in energy conservation, prevent the waste of these important resources, and prevent problems associated with their disposal. Where disposal is the goal, and a maximum amount is disposed in a minimum area to hold costs to a minimum, risk of environmental damage is the principal constraint. Where the reuse goal is pursued, and minimum amount is applied to a maximum area to obtain the greatest benefit, environmental damage is unlikely.

Interpretations developed for waste management may include ratings for manure and food processing wastes; municipal sewage sludge; irrigation use of wastewater; or treatment of wastewater by the slow rate process, overland flow process, or rapid infiltration process. These reports show the degree and kind of soil limitations affecting the treatment of agricultural waste, including municipal and food-processing wastewater and effluent from lagoons or storage ponds.

Agricultural Disposal of Manure, Food-Processing Waste, and Sewage Sludge

Soil properties are important considerations in areas where soils are used as sites for the treatment and disposal of organic waste and wastewater. Selection of soils with properties that favor waste management can help to prevent environmental damage.

This table shows the degree and kind of soil limitations affecting the treatment of agricultural waste, including municipal and food-processing wastewater and effluent from lagoons or storage ponds. Municipal wastewater is the waste stream from a municipality. It contains domestic waste and may contain industrial waste. It may have received primary or secondary treatment. It is rarely untreated sewage. Food-processing wastewater results from the preparation of fruits, vegetables, milk, cheese, and meats for public consumption. In places it is high in content of sodium and chloride. In the context of these tables, the effluent in lagoons and storage ponds is from facilities used to treat or store food-processing wastewater or domestic or animal waste. Domestic and food-processing wastewater is very dilute, and the effluent from the facilities that treat or store it commonly is very low in content of carbonaceous and nitrogenous material; the content of nitrogen commonly ranges from 10 to 30 milligrams per liter. The wastewater from animal waste treatment lagoons or storage ponds, however, has much higher concentrations of these materials, mainly because the manure has not been diluted as much as the domestic waste. The content of nitrogen in this wastewater generally ranges from 50 to 2,000 milligrams per liter. When wastewater is applied, checks should be made to ensure that nitrogen, heavy metals, and salts are not added in excessive amounts.

The ratings in the table are for waste management systems that not only dispose of and treat organic waste or wastewater but also are beneficial to crops. The ratings are both

verbal and numerical. Rating class terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features that affect agricultural waste management. **Not limited** indicates that the soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. **Somewhat limited** indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair performance and moderate maintenance can be expected. **Very limited** indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. The limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

Application of manure and food-processing waste not only disposes of waste material but also can improve crop production by increasing the supply of nutrients in the soils where the material is applied. Manure is the excrement of livestock and poultry, and food-processing waste is damaged fruit and vegetables and the peelings, stems, leaves, pits, and soil particles removed in food preparation. The manure and food-processing waste are solid, slurry, or liquid. Their nitrogen content varies. A high content of nitrogen limits the application rate. Toxic or otherwise dangerous wastes, such as those mixed with the lye used in food processing, are not considered in the ratings.

The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, erodibility, the rate at which the waste is applied, and the method by which the waste is applied. The properties that affect absorption include saturated hydraulic conductivity (K_{sat}), depth to a water table, ponding, the sodium adsorption ratio, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, and available water capacity. The properties that affect plant growth and microbial activity include reaction, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, and bulk density. The wind erodibility group, the soil erodibility factor K, and slope are considered in estimating the likelihood that wind erosion or water erosion will transport the waste material from the application site. Stones, cobbles, a water table, ponding, and flooding can hinder the application of waste. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Application of sewage sludge not only disposes of waste material but also can improve crop production by increasing the supply of nutrients in the soils where the material is applied. In the context of this table, sewage sludge is the residual product of the treatment of municipal sewage. The solid component consists mainly of cell mass, primarily bacteria cells that developed during secondary treatment and have incorporated soluble organics into their own bodies. The sludge has small amounts of sand, silt, and other solid debris. The content of nitrogen varies. Some sludge has constituents that are toxic to

plants or hazardous to the food chain, such as heavy metals and exotic organic compounds, and should be analyzed chemically prior to use.

The content of water in the sludge ranges from about 98 percent to less than 40 percent. The sludge is considered liquid if it is more than about 90 percent water, slurry if it is about 50 to 90 percent water, and solid if it is less than about 50 percent water.

The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, erodibility, the rate at which the sludge is applied, and the method by which the sludge is applied. The properties that affect absorption, plant growth, and microbial activity include K_{sat}, depth to a water table, ponding, the sodium adsorption ratio, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, available water capacity, reaction, salinity, and bulk density. The wind erodibility group, the soil erodibility factor K, and slope are considered in estimating the likelihood that wind erosion or water erosion will transport the waste material from the application site. Stones, cobbles, a water table, ponding, and flooding can hinder the application of sludge. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Agricultural Disposal of Wastewater by Irrigation and Overland Flow

Soil properties are important considerations in areas where soils are used as sites for the treatment and disposal of organic waste and wastewater. Selection of soils with properties that favor waste management can help to prevent environmental damage.

This table shows the degree and kind of soil limitations affecting the treatment of wastewater, including municipal and food-processing wastewater and effluent from lagoons or storage ponds. Municipal wastewater is the waste stream from a municipality. It contains domestic waste and may contain industrial waste. It may have received primary or secondary treatment. It is rarely untreated sewage. Food-processing wastewater results from the preparation of fruits, vegetables, milk, cheese, and meats for public consumption. In places it is high in content of sodium and chloride. In the context of these tables, the effluent in lagoons and storage ponds is from facilities used to treat or store food-processing wastewater or domestic or animal waste. Domestic and food-processing wastewater is very dilute, and the effluent from the facilities that treat or store it commonly is very low in content of carbonaceous and nitrogenous material; the content of nitrogen commonly ranges from 10 to 30 milligrams per liter. The wastewater from animal waste treatment lagoons or storage ponds, however, has much higher concentrations of these materials, mainly because the manure has not been diluted as much as the domestic waste. The content of nitrogen in this wastewater generally ranges from 50 to 2,000 milligrams per liter. When wastewater is applied, checks should be made to ensure that nitrogen, heavy metals, and salts are not added in excessive amounts.

The ratings in the table are for waste management systems that not only dispose of and treat wastewater but also are beneficial to crops. The ratings are both verbal and numerical. Rating class terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features that affect agricultural waste management. **Not limited** indicates that the

soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. **Somewhat limited** indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair performance and moderate maintenance can be expected. **Very limited** indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. The limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

Disposal of wastewater by irrigation not only disposes of municipal wastewater and wastewater from food-processing plants, lagoons, and storage ponds but also can improve crop production by increasing the amount of water available to crops. The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect the design, construction, management, and performance of the irrigation system. The properties that affect design and management include the sodium adsorption ratio, depth to a water table, ponding, available water capacity, Ksat, slope, and flooding. The properties that affect construction include stones, cobbles, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, depth to a water table, and ponding. The properties that affect performance include depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, bulk density, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, reaction, and the cation-exchange capacity, which is used to estimate the capacity of a soil to adsorb heavy metals. Permanently frozen soils are not suitable for disposal of wastewater by irrigation.

Overland flow of wastewater is a process in which wastewater is applied to the upper reaches of sloped land and allowed to flow across vegetated surfaces, sometimes called terraces, to runoff-collection ditches. The length of the run generally is 150 to 300 feet. The application rate ranges from 2.5 to 16.0 inches per week. It commonly exceeds the rate needed for irrigation of cropland. The wastewater leaves solids and nutrients on the vegetated surfaces as it flows downslope in a thin film. Most of the water reaches the collection ditch, some is lost through evapotranspiration, and a small amount may percolate to the ground water.

The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, and the design and construction of the system. Reaction and the cation-exchange capacity affect absorption. Reaction, salinity, and the sodium adsorption ratio affect plant growth and microbial activity. Slope, saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat), depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, stones, and cobbles affect design and construction. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Agricultural Disposal of Wastewater by Rapid Infiltration and Slow Rate Treatment

Soil properties are important considerations in areas where soils are used as sites for the treatment and disposal of organic waste and wastewater. Selection of soils with properties that favor waste management can help to prevent environmental damage.

This table shows the degree and kind of soil limitations affecting the treatment of wastewater, including municipal and food-processing wastewater and effluent from lagoons or storage ponds. Municipal wastewater is the waste stream from a municipality. It contains domestic waste and may contain industrial waste. It may have received primary or secondary treatment. It is rarely untreated sewage. Food-processing wastewater results from the preparation of fruits, vegetables, milk, cheese, and meats for public consumption. In places it is high in content of sodium and chloride. In the context of these tables, the effluent in lagoons and storage ponds is from facilities used to treat or store food-processing wastewater or domestic or animal waste. Domestic and food-processing wastewater is very dilute, and the effluent from the facilities that treat or store it commonly is very low in content of carbonaceous and nitrogenous material; the content of nitrogen commonly ranges from 10 to 30 milligrams per liter. The wastewater from animal waste treatment lagoons or storage ponds, however, has much higher concentrations of these materials, mainly because the manure has not been diluted as much as the domestic waste. The content of nitrogen in this wastewater generally ranges from 50 to 2,000 milligrams per liter. When wastewater is applied, checks should be made to ensure that nitrogen, heavy metals, and salts are not added in excessive amounts.

The ratings in the table are for waste management systems that not only dispose of and treat wastewater but also are beneficial to crops. The ratings are both verbal and numerical. Rating class terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features that affect agricultural waste management. **Not limited** indicates that the soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. **Somewhat limited** indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair performance and moderate maintenance can be expected. **Very limited** indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. The limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

Rapid infiltration of wastewater is a process in which wastewater applied in a level basin at a rate of 4 to 120 inches per week percolates through the soil. The wastewater may eventually reach the ground water. The application rate commonly exceeds the rate

needed for irrigation of cropland. Vegetation is not a necessary part of the treatment; hence, the basins may or may not be vegetated. The thickness of the soil material needed for proper treatment of the wastewater is more than 72 inches. As a result, geologic and hydrologic investigation is needed to ensure proper design and performance and to determine the risk of ground-water pollution.

The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect the risk of pollution and the design, construction, and performance of the system. Depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, and depth to bedrock or a cemented pan affect the risk of pollution and the design and construction of the system. Slope, stones, and cobbles also affect design and construction. Ksat and reaction affect performance. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Slow rate treatment of wastewater is a process in which wastewater is applied to land at a rate normally between 0.5 inch and 4.0 inches per week. The application rate commonly exceeds the rate needed for irrigation of cropland. The applied wastewater is treated as it moves through the soil. Much of the treated water may percolate to the ground water, and some enters the atmosphere through evapotranspiration. The applied water generally is not allowed to run off the surface. Waterlogging is prevented either through control of the application rate or through the use of tile drains, or both.

The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, erodibility, and the application of waste. The properties that affect absorption include the sodium adsorption ratio, depth to a water table, ponding, available water capacity, Ksat, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, reaction, the cation-exchange capacity, and slope. Reaction, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, and bulk density affect plant growth and microbial activity. The wind erodibility group, the soil erodibility factor K, and slope are considered in estimating the likelihood of wind erosion or water erosion. Stones, cobbles, a water table, ponding, and flooding can hinder the application of waste. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.